Statement of Robert Nawrocki

before the

Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census

Good morning. My name is Robert F. Nawrocki and I am currently the Director of the Records and Imaging Services Division of the Library of Virginia. I have been in records and information management for over 30 years. I am a certified records manager and a past president of ARMA International.

The Library of Virginia has responsibility for the Commonwealth's records management and archival programs. As such we work closely with state and local agencies to assist them with the management of their records. Electronic records have become a significant issue in the last 5 years. In 2000 the Library hired its first Electronic Records Coordinator to develop policies, guidance and to provide advice on the management of electronic records. I was fortunate to have filled that position from 2000 until April 25th when I become Director of the Division.

In the late 1990s a number of counties began to use scanning and electronic storage for the recording of deeds. While this reduced the amount of space required and improved access it did not provide the long term stability and preservation required of such records.

Changes to the Code of Virginia made digital images legal substitutes or replacements for original documents. The Library wanted to encourage the use of microfilm as a backup to digital images since there are no recognized permanent media in the digital arena. When stored properly microfilm can last almost 500 years. Through a philanthropist LVA obtain a Kodak Archive Writer to convert digital images into microfilm. Using an encrypted Internet connection scanned images were sent to the Library's State Records Center where they were stored on a RAID device until the data could be written to microfilm. The microfilm was then processed, underwent quality control and the resultant silver negatives stored in the State Records Center's media vault. This

project continued until the fall of 2002 when most of the microfilm staff was laid off due to extreme budget cuts. Private vendors will now provide the same conversion that the library did at about the same cost. The microfilm negatives are stilled stored in the records center's media vault. We consider that the project was valuable since it showed the benefit of a hybrid system which allowed counties to provide faster, distributed access with electronic records while preserving those records, at a lower cost, using a proven technology, microfilm.

Over the past three years the Library has worked to educate state and local agencies about electronic records and the best methods to preserve them. Guidelines for transferring electronic records into the archives are under development. Our greatest concern is that in the short term we will lose access to these records before a reliable method of archiving them is developed. We have found that the single most important tool for raising awareness is education through presentations and articles in state publications. Secondly we believe the development of guidelines that provide advice and suggested tools for electronic records creators is also useful. It is important to not develop guidelines and tools that are too narrowly drawn since the same solution is not applicable in all situations. Flexibility is the key to as long as the proper result is achieved. Additionally records managers and archivists must work closely and cooperatively with their Information Technology associates. We need to collaborate with them when new information systems and the required information architectures are being developed to insure that the appropriate records management functions are included. We have found that by working with IT and making them aware of records management and archival needs and requirements enables everyone to perform their jobs better.

. It is important to remember that during the entire process of creating and preserving electronic records we must continue to preserve the evidentiary aspect of the electronic record. This cannot be done unless the appropriate audit trails and safeguards have been built into the information architecture. If the electronic records are not shown to be reliable and have integrity their evidentiary value will be zero and the work to preserve them will be wasted. This can only be

done through the collaboration and work of all parties involved in the creation, use, maintenance and preservation of the electronic records.

There is much hard work to be done now and in the future. This work can be only done through the collaboration and involvement of all whether they are in the federal, state or local governments or private industry.

Electronic records present a serious problem for everyone. Rapid technological change results in records only a few years old being unrecoverable because the hardware or software needed does not exist. While there is significant and expensive research being done long-term on electronic preservation we need to remember that we have to manage these records in the short-term so that when the proverbial “magic bullet’ is created there will be older electronic records to be preserved. The current effort to create a Portable Document Format-Archival is an excellent example of this thinking. The use of hybrid analog/digital systems is another. We need more collaborations like this which utilize existing technology and software to provide records managers, archivists and librarians with the tools needed to manage today’s electronic records. We also need to continue to use the tools, both analog and digital, which allow us to provide access to existing electronic records and preserve them at the same time. There is much work being done around the world in the field of digital preservation and sharing of information. This is necessary and must continue if we are to solve this seemingly intractable problem.